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IN

WRITTEN FROM SOMERSETSHIRE.

IN THE YEAR 1776.

TO

***** Esq.

IN SCOTLAND.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR J. MURRAY, NO. 32, FLEET STREET,
BY J. COOPER, NO. 31, BOW STREET, COVENT GARDEN,
WITH HIS NEW-INVENTED INK.

M, DCC, LXXXIX.

EPITAPHI

V. E. R. S. E.

WRITTEN BY ONE SOMERSETSHIRE.

1771 1772 1773 1774

Figure 1

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E P I S T L E.

To hang with woods the mountain's side,
 Or bid the less'ning grove retire,
~~Opening to fight the distant fight~~
 (Nor yet has Fate to thee deny'd
 Rich fields, with golden grain supply'd,
 *******W**ITHDRAWN to calm retreat,
 In Scottish fields, thy much-lov'd seat,
 From the proud scenes near Thames' clear stream,
 When now the summer's sultry beam
 Recess to senators ordains,
 And London not in vain complains
 That the gay throng desert her walls
 To hasten where the pure air calls:
 Say, in thy native Scottish ground,
 What fair amusements hast thou found?

That may engage the vacant day
 And steal the summer months away?
 Is it thy joy, with better skill,
 To teach the clear meand'ring rill
 Through thy green vales and fields to glide,
 To hang with woods the mountain's side,
 Or bid the less'ning grove retire,
 Opening to sight the distant spire?
 (Nor yet has Fate to thee deny'd
 Rich fields, with golden grain supply'd,
 And waving groves, and pastures green,
 Wash'd with the chrystal streams between,
 That from the uplands wand'ring flow,
 To mix with Forth's blue waves below.)
 When harvest to the sickle yields,
 Is it thy joy in stubble fields
 Where basks the covey in the sun,
 With the loud thunder of the gun,
 Which thy just eye has levell'd true,
 The flying partridge to pursue;

And

And oft to rouse, with early horn,
 And jocund shout, the rosy morn,
 Whilst Echo from her seat rebounds
 Through the hoarse shores the hunters' sounds,
 And eager of the chace, the steed
 Prepares to pour forth all his speed?
 Or, say, if through the vacant day
 Thee most the learned muses sway,
 To whom thy natal hour was dear,
 Whilst now they bring to thy rapt ear
 The strain of bard renown'd of old;
 Now the historic page unfold,
 Or else disclose, of sense more deep,
 The laws that wand'ring planets keep,
 Why the pale moon the sea controls,
 Why meteors glide, and thunder rolls,
 Till, borne from earth, the spirit springs
 Aloft on Contemplation's wings.

Me, B. 2. by her winding

Me, (nor yet, at the Fates' decree,
 Though far they lead my steps from thee,
 May I with thoughts too rash repine;
 Me, where the southern shores incline
 Of Britain to the Western main,
 My destinies mean-while detain
 In Somerset's green bounds, that lie
 Beneath a mild indulgent sky.
 Fair is the land of fruitful soil,
 Repaying well the labourer's toil,
 That Somerset's wide space unfolds;
 And in her glad embrace she holds
 Her pleasant vales and fields among
 A race industrious, healthy, strong,
 Of hospitable nature known,
 Generous, sincere, that guile disown:
 Nor vainly she of elder days
 The undecay'd renown displays,
 While still she shews the sacred ground,
 Fenc'd by her winding rivers round,

The

The Thone and Parret's glassy wave,
 That to the gallant Alfred gave,
 And to the nobles by his side,
 The hope of England and the pride,
 Amidst its bounds a woody seat,
 From Danish foes a fast retreat*,
 Yet, whilst with no unwilling pace,
 Fair Somerset's domain I trace,
 In fancy oft delighted, I
 The distant Caledonia spy;
 Her op'ning vales, in green array'd,
 And set with trees of ample shade,
 Fair winding by the pleasant side
 Of some clear river, wand'ring Clyde,
 Romantic Eske, the past'ral Tweed,
 Inspiring oft the shepherd's reed;

* Athelney, or the Isle of Nobles, in the County of Somerset, surrounded by the rivers Thone and Parret, the retreat amidst whose woods and morasses Alfred and the English Lords concealed themselves, till they had gathered strength to repress the victorious Danes.

Or else of ruder aspect seen,
 Invested with an air more keen,
 Her mountains that with steep sides rise,
 Alp above Alp, to meet the skies,
 While at their feet in spacious bed,
 The silver lakes their waters spread,
 And Lomond, with a pure flood, laves
 The green isles planted in his waves :
 Nor seldom, in the grove retir'd,
 With rev'rence of past times inspir'd,
 I muse on Caledonia's praise,
 And with high deeds my thoughts I raise
 Of Scottish heroes, fam'd of old,
 Wallace the first, firm patriot bold,
 Of gallant spirit unsubdu'd ;
 The royal Bruce, with might endu'd
 A fallen kingdom to restore ;
 The Stuart, fam'd on Renfrew's shore,
 From whom the land her princes drew ;
 Douglas, who mighty bands o'erthrew,

The

The valiant Lord of Liddale's ground;
 And who, of like renown, are found
 A numerous train, in arms that shone
 Supporters of the Scottish Throne,
 And for high val'rous acts display'd,
 Are crown'd with laurels undecay'd.

Oh! they, ungenerous in our age,
 Transported with unseemly rage,
 Who would with fland'rous speech defame
 An ancient kingdom's honour'd name,
 Nor bear in mind the just renown
 That Caledonia claims her own,
 In ages known for martial worth,
 When, with the Thistle of the North,
 The Rose was wont a strife to keep;
 When Solway, yet with waters deep,
 And Tweed, conspir'd, with swelling tide,
 The hostile kingdoms to divide.

Oh!

Oh ! days, whose memory to retrace
 Will long our Caledonia grace,
 When from her borders, hill and dale,
 Where Eske or Etric bathes the vale,
 And Tiviot leads to Tweed his wave,
 Led by their Barons, bold and brave,
 Issu'd the Scottish youths in arms,
 Bent on adventure and alarms ;
 To hostile grounds advancing fast,
 With fierce defiance loudly cast
 To English warriors, whom like fire
 And love of martial arts inspire.
 Fierce was the conflict, loud the sound
 Borne by redoubling echoes round,
 That clashing arms and clarions keep
 On the dark fides of Cheviot steep,
 By Werke, or Norham's towery pride,
 Or where deep Tyne pours down his tide ;
 And hardy deeds in war were wrought
 Where the keen sword of Douglas fought,

Or

Or where the banner was display'd
 Of Randolph, Murray's land that sway'd,
 With well-appointed host withstood
 By knights renown'd of English blood;
 Mowbray, the Neville's ancient name,
 The Percy kindling martial flame,
 And who besides were of the band,
 That on the Marches bore command,
 Whose names, yet through her winding shores,
 Northumbria's wide land adores.
 Nor yet black hate, or savage rage,

Disgrac'd the combats of that age.

For by the Tweed and Tyne's clear wave,
 Where proofs the gallant warrior gave,

English or Scot, of prowess true,

Worship'd with reverence most due,

Fam'd Chivalry her feat obtain'd;

And she to valorous knight ordain'd,

Who would renown in arms acquire,

Honour unblemish'd, faith entire,

Brave emulation free from spite,
 And courtesy with gentle rite.
 Hence gallant minds, to love of arms
 Wedded alike, and glory's charms,
 By mutual bands each other drew;
 And from the bloody strife oft grew
 Friendship approv'd, and just esteem,
 As might such gallant foes bescem*.
 But if, by chance of arms, or might,
 The Scot victorious in the fight

* Car Anglois d'un côté, et Escoçois de l'autre, sont moult bons gens d'armes, et quand ils se trouvent ou rencontrent au party d'armes, c'est sans s'epargner. Il n'y a entre eux nul ho. Tant que lances, épées, haches, dagues, peuvent durer, ils fierent et frappent l'un sur l'autre; et quand ils se sont bien battus, et que l'une partie obtient, ils se glorifient tant en leurs armes, et sont si rejouis, que sur les champs ceux qui sont pris et fiançez sont rançonnez; et savez vous comment? Si trestost et si courtoisement, que chacun se content de son compaignon, et qu'au departement ils dient grand merci. Mais en combattant et en faisant armes, l'un sur l'autre, il n'y a point de jeu ni d'epargne.

FROISSART.

The

The vanquish'd Percy did enthrall;
 Not at the Scottish Baron's hall,
 Or hospitable feast or dance,
 Or martial tournament, or glance
 Cast from the eye of lady bright,
 Was wanting to the captive knight,
 'That might yield pleasure, and beguile
 The hours of thralldom for a while.
 Thus Caledonia was crown'd
 In days of chivalry renown'd.
 Nor on her green hills, though alarms
 Oft call'd a martial age to arms,
 The voice of melody was mute;
 Whilst on his reed and breathing flute,
 In notes that Echo worships still,
 And oft repeats from hill to hill,
 On Etric's banks, or in the broom
 Of Cowdenknows, or midst the bloom
 Of flowers on Yarrow blowing fair,
 Or near the green bush of Traquair,

The Scottish shepherd, Music's child,
 His songs delightful warbled wild,
 Pour'd genuine from the heart, and warm,
 Beyond the strains of art that charm:
 With modulation sweet the lay
 Now swelling through the woods more gay,
 The shepherd's pure joy to relate,
 His artless pleasures, tranquil state;
 Now flowing plaintive down the vale
 To waft the shepherd's am'rous tale,
 His secret sighs, and love's sweet anguish,
 Breath'd in soft notes that gently languish.
 The past'ral powers applaud the song,
 And Tweed, delighted, glides along.

Oh! days, whose fair share of renown
 Not Time shall in oblivion drown,
 That not fierce rage, or envy dark,
 Though willing, with foul stain can mark;

Of

Of which, reclining on her spear,
 Still Caledonia loves to hear;
 And turning oft her looks aside
 From vain displays of modern pride
 That age to mark rejoices more,
 Her Northern sceptre when she bore,
 And rul'd, though not of ample space,
 Her rude domain of various face,
 Mountain or valley, forest ground,
 That stretch'd to Tweed its farthest bound;
 And when against superior might,
 To vindicate her ancient right
 She with a pow'rful rival strove,
 And back the Southern banners drove;
 Till the long flight of ages past,
 The Destinies' decree at last,
 Darkly foretold in mystic rhymes
 Ill understood in early times,
 Gave to the Scottish Kings command
 Supreme, in Britain's spacious land.

The Rose and Thistle, now ally'd,
 Their ancient strife have laid aside,
 And of rude discord to efface,
 And of past injury the trace
 That to their kindred blood did wrong,
 The mighty rivals, who so long
 Kept in the isle distinct command,
 Conspire, with willing hands, to found
 One mighty kingdom, matchless frame,
 Majestic, whose far-honour'd name,
 To the last shore, where ocean bounds
 The green earth's space, with praise resounds.
 Nor yet her share of bright renown
 Our Caledonia lays down,
 Or from her princely state is cast,
 Who now of mighty empire vast
 Partakes the sway, partakes the pride,
 Thron'd by her ancient rival's side;
 Nor yet, unless with partial eye
 The Muse her later acts descry,

In various fields of action try'd,
 Has she her place amiss supply'd,
 Since call'd by Fate, with loftier look,
 Of wider empire she partook,
 Her Northern Thistle, rude and keen,
 With the bright Rose entwining seen: *****

Yet arduous tasks and toils severe,
 If she, advanc'd in higher sphere,
 To move, would keep her fame entire,
 Her earnest care and zeal require.
 And oft in words persuasive, sound,
 She warns her sons, more worthy found,
 Whom better thoughts and views engage,
 That conscious of the former age,
 When she maintain'd her Scottish crown,
 And jealous of her just renown,
 They ought, in times illustrious born,
 When brighter wreaths her brow adorn,

And

And she a higher part sustains,
 Pious to strive with generous pains
 To lift on high her honour'd name
 With fair encrease of shining fame.

 to whom indulgent fate
 Has lent just honours, fair estate,
 And sprightly youth for action fram'd,
 Quick sense, sound judgement, truth unblam'd,
 Ingenuous nature, upright mind,
 Candid and just to humankind,
 Manners beside, and arts polite;
 And more thy virtues to incite,
 Has in thy house conspicuous plac'd,
 With such bright ornament most grac'd,
 An image where true worth display'd
 Is in thy father's acts pourtray'd:
 (An honour'd name, lamented most,
 Too soon, alas! to Albion lost;

Beside

Beside whose tomb, with pilgrim feet,
 Pensive the patriot virtues meet,
 Sad vigils at due times to keep,
 And honour, truth, and friendship, weep)

 in whom fair gifts conspire,
 Of thee thy country will require,
 Among her sons, whose better frame,
 To noble purpose, generous flame,
 She tries by pow'rful words to move,
 That thou thy zeal shouldst well approve,
 Her name with honours new to raise,
 And, with thy own, encrease her praise.

Amidst the tranquil scenes now plac'd,
 In thy own groves and hills embrac'd,
 It well beseems thee to employ
 The day in rural cares and joy:
 Thy fields and pastures to extend,
 New harvests to the glebe to lend,

The

The heath or moor's reluctant foil,
 Subdu'd by culture's patient toil;
 Thy groves to open, and to gain
 The prospect round, the swelling main
 Where ships their sails at distance spread,
 The far-off coast, the mountain's head;
 Or where thy glens romantic bend,
 Till at the sea-beat shore they end,
 Along the winding banks to stretch,
 The oak, the spiry fir, the beech,
 A multitude of shady ranks,
 For which the wood-nymphs pay thee thanks.
 With love of sports and toils inflam'd,
 That to thy youth robust are fram'd,
 When the loud cry of deep-mouth'd hounds
 Awakes the morn with chearful sounds,
 It suits thee well, with manly fire,
 To give thee to the chace entire;
 Eager the swift pursuit to keep,
 Now headlong down the vale to sweep,

Now

Now up the hill's steep side to strain,
 Woods, rocks, and floods, oppos'd in vain;
 While the brave exercise maintains
 Stout hardihood, that fear disdains,
 And health and vigour by her side,
 And joyous spirits in full tide.
 In a bright age, for arts renown'd,
 In which philosophy is crown'd,
 And every muse obtains her palm,
 It well becomes thy leisure calm,
 Science, bright virgin, sage and meek,
 That frown'd not on thy birth, to seek;
 She, courteous to engage thee more,
 Disclosing what her priests of yore
 In sacred characters have writ,
 And what beside of modern wit,
 Though lighter, she may not disdain
 In her fair volume to contain:
 Nor in thy hall, whose spacious bound
 The hospitable powers surround,

Thy table will it ill besit,
 Where social converse loves to fit,
 And decent wit, gay humour shine,
 Enlivening best the gen'rous wine,
 That learning sometimes be a guest;
 Not in dark looks austerely drest,
 But in the circle taught to please
 By smooth politeness, chearful ease,
 Holding, in words of simple sort,
 Her argument of deep import,
 Discreet her speech when to pursue,
 When to restrain at season due.

Such leifure in the rural shade,
 In days for calm retirement made,
 Such leifure that the wise my love,
 ***** , it fits thee well to prove.
 But not alone the shade to thee
 And calm sequester'd scenes agree,

And

And weightier cares and nobler aim,
 And tasks that higher talents claim,
 Of thee thy country will require;
 If thou wouldst pay to her entire
 Her love and favour, freely lent,
 If thou, to work her praise intent,
 Wouldst bend thy resolute thought and skill,
 That place which she appoints to fill.
 The scenes that sooth the vacant mind,
 Thy fields, thy groves, oft cast behind,
 Of public counsel, public care,
 Largely with honest warmth to share:
 A patriot of just zeal approv'd,
 By partial interests unmov'd,
 Through all the snares of public life,
 Corruption's lure, ambition's strife,
 Of Britain's state well understood
 To seek with steadfast aim the good:
 Firm in the senate, ardent, bold,
 The state's just balance to uphold;

Prepar'd

Prepar'd alike the war to wage
 With troubled anarchy's blind rage,
 Or tyranny's despotic reign,
 (If liberty, our Queen, will deign,
 Though ill contented with our ill,
 Yet to delay her flight awhile,
 And may consent, our crimes among,
 Her stay in Albion to prolong :)
 Wide o'er the empire, powerful, vast,
 That Britain holds, thy look to cast,
 Pondering, if aught undue, unsound,
 In that proud fabric may be found,
 If danger threat from hostile blow,
 Or guile that works unseen below,
 Thy view oft tracing back the past,
 Oft to the future wisely cast:
 These are the tasks of nobler kind,
 That will demand thy earnest mind
 Their purpose fitly to supply;
 That well thy better powers will try,

Thy

Thy vigorous sense, thy judgement sure,
 Thy temp'rate spirit, nature pure;
 That may not ill thy youth engage
 And aptly will become thy age:
 These are the tasks to thee that fall,
 If thou wilt hear thy country's call.

Ah! in the rural shade retir'd,
 With pleasure by the scene inspir'd,
 Slumbring beside the crystal stream,
 And happy in the golden dream
 Of Britain's greatness, Britain's pride,
 Cast not thy vigilance aside,
 Nor thoughts delusive entertain
 That all the patriot's cares are vain.
 To us th' auspicious times belong,
 When first of nations, wealthy, strong,
 By arts of gentle peace renown'd,
 In war with ample laurels crown'd,
 Beyond

Beyond the boast of former days,
 Her glory Britain's isle displays.
 Fann'd in her course by happiest gales,
 The sun beams bright'ning her gay sails,
 Triumphant, through the placid deeps
 Her way the prosperous vessel keeps:
 But, ah! the rocks unseen beware,
 Nor quit the pilot's prudent care,
 And wisely mark, with jealous eyes,
 That tranquil deep, those flatt'ring skies,
 E'en in these moments, when elate
 With long successes, Britain's state
 Her lofty head, exulting, rears,
 And hopes that through a length of years
 She prosperous fortune may detain
 Her slave, as in a golden chain;
 E'en in these moments of her pride,
 Her evil genius may provide,
 With busy malice, rancour keen,
 A train of dangers, dark, unseen,

That

That may in ambush armed wait,
 To seize the proud unwary state,
 And cast her from her fair renown
 To sudden shame and ruin down.
 Oh, then redouble ye your zeal,
 Ye guardians of the public weal,
 Patriots with firm hearts, and pure,
 And not in fancied might secure,
 But mindful of the ages past,
 And of the sudden fall that cast
 Proud Babylon, renown'd of old,
 And lofty Rome, from thrones of gold,
 To graves of deep oblivion dark;
 Oh! wise, the latent ills remark
 That menace fatal overthrow,
 If yet ye may avert the blow.

Lo! as of late in serious mood,
 Pondering past times and Britain's good,
 Lonely

Lonely I trod the woody bounds
 That Thone and Parret's wave furrounds,
 And gave due homage to the shade
 Sacred by royal Alfred made,
 Without a breeze the forest shook;
 A sudden trance my senses took:
 Slow to my sight, with scepter'd hand,
 And noble port that bore command,
 Methought that Alfred's form advanc'd;
 The hero I admire entranc'd;
 Crown'd are his temples, and display
 The statesman's and the warrior's bay;
 His looks mild majesty declare;
 But sorrow, as it seem'd, and care
 Had cast pale sadness on his look;
 While in these words his speech he took:
 " O land, through ages past belov'd,
 " That in worst times my zeal has prov'd
 " Thy bounds from ruthless foes to free,
 " What evils in thy coasts I see !

That

" That e'en in regions of the blest,
 " Disturb thy Alfred's sainted rest
 " The laws august bear not the sway;
 " Bold vice stalks forth in open day
 " Prostrate the Briton's spirit falls;
 " Gold worse than Danish steel enthalls;
 " And luxury, enthron'd, retains
 " A race degenerate in her chains.
 " The patriot virtues sad retire,
 " And mourn extinct their sacred fire.
 " The guilty lust of power prevails;
 " Faction the troubled state affails;
 " And discord aims a dangerous wound;
 " Whilst empire, that beyond just bound
 " To swell a cumbrous greatness strains,
 " Her own vast burden scarce sustains.
 " With secret dread I try to mark
 " Futurity's long mazes dark.
 " Late as to watch o'er Britain's good,
 " Descending near this spot I stood,

" Spirits

" Spirits superior, that by fate
 " Foreknow of mortal things the date,
 " Rung from the darkness of their cloud,
 " Startling my ear, mysterious, loud,
 " A dire alarm, awful, strange,
 " As if portending fearful change.
 " Hark ! whilst again I seek these bounds,
 " What troubled and lamenting sounds,
 " As of a falling state the knell,
 " Those higher spirits that foretell
 " Of Empires proud the overthrow,
 " Ring through the concave, solemn, slow.
 " O Britain, long of isles the pride,
 " Hast thou been in the balance tried,
 " Hung from the circle of the skies,
 " That in its scale impartial tries
 " The merits of proud states below,
 " Ere Heaven decree the fatal blow ?
 " Art thou found wanting in the scale,
 " And may not Alfred's pray'rs avail ?

The vision from my sight withdrew:
 But gelid sweats my limbs bedew,
 And all my frame pale horrors shake;
 Sudden I from deep trance awake,
 And cast my earnest eyes around;
 I hear the songs of birds resound,
 And to my sight alone appear
 The groves and gliding waters near.
 Imprest with this mysterious dream,
 I wander by the river stream,
 And sadly serious thoughts pursue;
 Till evening with a darker hue
 Has stain'd the woods and mountain's sides,
 And in the sky bright Hesper rides.

Thus to thy leisure, by blue Forth
 Well knowing all thy bosom's worth,
 My verse, oh! ***** I indite;
 Willing thy genius to incite,

And The bosom of the swelling deep.

And prove, though hills unkind divide,
 And streams between us pour their tide,
 My love to thee and zeal the same,
 Sincere, that glows with equal flame.
 But my flight pinnace, all too frail
 To ride where ocean's waves assail,
 The shore and river-bed that keeps,
 Too far into the perilous deeps
 Had launch'd ere she was well aware,
 And, shatter'd, she must needs prepare,
 With lusty stroke of well-ply'd oar,
 To gain, with fitting haste, the shore.
 Gladly I turn to land the prow;
 And, drawing near the shore, I vow,
 That not deceitful gales again,
 Or the calm surface of the main,
 Shall tempt my small bark to forsake
 The shore's safe station, or smooth lake,
 And with her slender oar to sweep
 The bosom of the swelling deep.

11 7 19

THE END.

B O O K S

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